

## **Appendix 4**

### CBO Interview Questions

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT CBO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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## ***RURAL DEVELOPMENT CBO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS***

**Interviewer: Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your Organization was asked to participate in this interview because we understand your members are primarily women and/or minority farmers/ranchers. The focus of our questions are the experiences of members who, during the past three years, were customers, potential customers, individuals who unsuccessfully applied for technical or financial assistance, or who are individuals who were eligible for, but for some reason were dissuaded from, applying for technical or financial assistance. I want to make sure understand that you are free to decline to answer any question and anything thing you say or do not say today will not affect in any way your or your members' ability to receive financial or technical programs or services from USDA. Your privacy concerning the information you provide during this interview will be protected to the full extent permitted by law.**

### **1. First Topic -- Initial Contacts with Rural Development**

- How do your members first become aware of USDA Rural Development (RD)?
- How do they learn about programs RD offered?
- What is the position title of the first RD employee they ordinarily speak with?
  - o Who do they deal most with?

### **2. Second Topic -- Effectiveness of RD Program Communications**

- Generally, how satisfied are your members with the information they receive about RD programs?
- How satisfied are they with how effectively RD employees inform them of program opportunities?
- How could communications by RD with customers and the public be improved?

### **3. Third Topic -- Outreach**

- Other than contacting RD directly, are there other ways your members learn about RD programs?

- Which ways that RD has tried to inform your members/public about available programs do your members believe are most effective?
- How would your members suggest RD try and reach customers and potential customers to inform them about its programs?

#### **4. Fourth Topic -- Application Process**

- How would your members describe the application process?
- Do they receive assistance with the application?
  - From whom?
- How would your members describe the service they received from RD staff during the application process?
  - Were they treated courteously and professionally?
- Were the decisions on their applications made in a timely manner?
- Were there any costs associated with applying/utilizing programs your members find burdensome?

#### **5. Fifth Topic -- Fairness/Discrimination**

- What is RD's reputation in the community for fairness?
  - Why?
- Do your members believe they were treated fairly, prior to submitting their application?
  - During the application process?
  - During the approval process?
  - After receiving their approval/denial notification?
  - Why/why not?
- Do your members believe they are treated fairly and without discrimination by RD?
  - If not, what do your members feel is the basis for unfair or discriminatory treatment?

#### **6. Sixth Topic -- Denial of Application and Appeals**

- If your members' applications are denied, is the reason for the denial explained to their satisfaction?
- How long after your members submit their application do they receive notification regarding the denial?
- Do your members believe the reasons given for the denial are true?
  - Why/why not?
- For your members whose applications were denied, were they made aware of an appeals process?
  - Did any of your members file a complaint?
- What was their experience during the appeals process?
- How satisfied were they with the appeals process?
  - Did they think it was fair and non-discriminatory?

## **7. Seventh Topic -- RD Website**

- Have your members looked at the RD state website?
- Have your members looked at the RD national website?
- If so, what do they use it for?
- Do they find it easy or difficult to use?
  - Did they find what they were looking for?
- What could be done to improve the website(s)?

## **8. Eighth Topic -- Accessibility (Geographic and Physical)**

- How far away is the nearest RD office from your members' homes?
- Would they describe the distance and location of the office as convenient?
- Does the distance or location cause your members any difficulty in participating in programs or receiving services from RD?
- Are there any physical or other barriers at the office that make it difficult for your members to obtain services there?

## **9. Ninth Topic -- Participation Barriers**

- Is there any reason why any of your members declined participate in RD programs even though they were eligible for and could have benefited from the program?
- Is there any reason why a customer or potential customer would be reluctant to participate in RD programs?
- Are there any policies or procedures at the local, state, or national level that make it more difficult for customers or potential customers to participate in RD programs?
- Is there any type of language barrier that makes it more difficult for your members to participate in RD programs?

## **10. Tenth and Final Topic -- Improvements**

- What can RD do to make it easier for your members to participate in RD programs?
- How can RD improve its procedures and programs to better serve customers in a non-discriminatory manner?
- How can RD improve its services to better serve your members?
- Given your members' experiences with USDA, what changes, improvements, or actions would your members take immediately to make USDA customers feel comfortable that they will be treated fairly and encourage them to take advantage of USDA services?

## **NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE CBO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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## **NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE CBO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Interviewer: Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your Organization was asked to participate in this interview because we understand your members are primarily women and/or minority farmers/ranchers. The focus of our questions are the experiences of members who, during the past three years, were customers, potential customers, individuals who unsuccessfully applied for technical or financial assistance, or who are individuals who were eligible for, but for some reason were dissuaded from, applying for technical or financial assistance. I want to make sure understand that you are free to decline to answer any question and anything thing you say or do not say today will not affect in any way your or your members' ability to receive financial or technical programs or services from USDA. Your privacy concerning the information you provide during this interview will be protected to the full extent permitted by law.**

### **1. Initial Contacts with Natural Resources Conservation Service**

- How do your members first become aware of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)?
- How do they learn about programs NRCS offers?
- What is the position title of the first NRCS employee they ordinarily speak with?
  - Who do they deal most with?

### **2. Effectiveness of NRCS Program Communications**

- Generally, how satisfied are your members with the information they receive about NRCS programs?
- How satisfied are they with how effectively NRCS employees inform them of program opportunities?
- How could communications by NRCS with customers and the public be improved?
- Was it explained to your members that technical assistance was available to them without application for programs?

- Have any of your members received any technical or financial assistance?
  - o How would they describe their experiences?
  - o Has any NRCS or Conservation District employee personally visited any of your members' farms?

### **3. Outreach**

- Other than contacting NRCS directly, are there other ways your members learn about NRCS programs?
- Which ways that NRCS has tried to inform your members/public about available programs do your members believe are most effective?
- How would your members suggest NRCS try to reach customers and potential customers to inform them about its programs?

### **4. Application/Grant Process**

- How would your members describe the application process?
- Do they receive assistance with the application?
  - o From whom?
- How would your members describe the service they received from NRCS staff during the application process?
  - o Were they treated courteously and professionally?
- Were the decisions on their applications made in a timely manner?

### **5. Fairness/Discrimination**

- What is NRCS's reputation in the community for fairness?
  - o Why?
- Do your members believe they were treated fairly, prior to submitting their application?
  - o During the application process?
  - o During the approval process?
  - o After receiving their approval/denial notification?
  - o Why/why not?
- Do your members believe they are treated fairly and without discrimination by NRCS?
  - o If not, what do your members feel was the basis for unfair or discriminatory treatment?

### **6. Denial of Application and Appeals**

- If your members' applications are denied, is the reason for the denial explained to their satisfaction?
- How long after your members submit their applications do they receive notification regarding the denials?
- Do your members believe the reasons given for the denial are true?
  - o Why/why not?



- For your members whose applications were denied, were they made aware of an appeals process?
  - Did any of your members file a complaint?
- What were their experiences during the appeals process?
- How satisfied were they with the appeals process?
  - Did they think it was fair and non-discriminatory?

## **7. NRCS Website**

- Have your members looked at the NRCS state website?
- Have your members looked at the NRCS national website?
- If so, what do they use it for?
- Do they find it easy or difficult to use? Did they find what they were looking for?
- What could be done to improve the website(s)?

## **8. Accessibility (Geographic and Physical)**

- How far away is the nearest NRCS office from your members' homes?
- Would they describe the distance and location of the office as convenient?
- Does the distance or location cause any difficulty in your members participating in programs or receiving services from NRCS?
- Are there any physical or other barriers at the office that make it difficult to obtain services there?

## **9. Participation Barriers**

- Is there any reason why any of your members declined participate in NRCS programs even though they were eligible for and could have benefited from the program?
- Is there any reason why a customer or potential customer would be reluctant to participate in NRCS programs?
- Are there any policies or procedures at the local, state, or national level that make it more difficult for customers or potential customers to participate in NRCS programs?
  - How many programs have your members participated in?
  - What has been their experience after they received approval for funding?
- Is there any impact to your members of the requirement that they install a conservation practice before payment is made?
  - Describe the impact.
- Is there any type of language barrier that makes it more difficult for your members to participate in NRCS programs?

## **10. Improvements**

- What can NRCS do to make it easier for your members to participate in NRCS programs?

- How can NRCS improve its procedures and programs to better serve customers in a non-discriminatory manner?
- How can NRCS improve its services to better serve your members?
- Given your members experiences with USDA, what changes, improvements, or actions would your members take immediately to make USDA customers feel comfortable that they will be treated fairly and encourage them to take advantage of USDA services?

## **FARM SERVICE AGENCY CBO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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## ***FARM SERVICE AGENCY CBO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS***

**Interviewer: Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your Organization was asked to participate in this interview because we understand your members are primarily women and/or minority farmers/ranchers. The focus of our questions are the experiences of members who, during the past three years, were customers, potential customers, individuals who unsuccessfully applied for technical or financial assistance, or who are individuals who were eligible for, but for some reason were dissuaded from, applying for technical or financial assistance. I want to make sure understand that you are free to decline to answer any question and anything thing you say or do not say today will not affect in any way your or your members' ability to receive financial or technical programs or services from USDA. Your privacy concerning the information you provide during this interview will be protected to the full extent permitted by law.**

### **1. Initial Contacts with Farm Service Agency**

- How do your members first become aware of USDA Farm Service Agency ("FSA")?
- How do they learn about programs FSA offers?
- What is the position title of the first FSA employee they ordinarily speak with?
  - Who do they deal most with?

### **2. Effectiveness of FSA Program Communications**

- Generally, how satisfied are your members with the information they receive about FSA programs?
- How satisfied are they with how effectively FSA employees inform them of program opportunities?
- How could communications by FSA with customers and the public be improved?

### **3. Outreach**

- Other than contacting FSA directly, are there other ways your members learn about FSA programs?
- Which ways that FSA has tried to inform your members/public about available programs do your members believe are most effective?
- How would your members suggest FSA try and reach customers and potential customers to inform them about its programs?

#### **4. Application Process**

- How would your members describe the application process?
- Do they receive assistance with the application?
  - From whom?
- How would your members describe the service they received from FSA staff during the application process?
  - Were they treated courteously and professionally?
- Were the decisions on their applications made in a timely manner?

#### **5. Fairness/Discrimination**

- What is FSA's reputation in the community for fairness?
  - Why?
- Do your members believe they were treated fairly, prior to submitting their application?
  - During the application process?
  - During the approval process?
  - After receiving their approval/denial notification?
  - Why/why not?
- Do your members believe they are treated fairly and without discrimination by FSA?
  - If not, what do your members feel is the basis for unfair or discriminatory treatment?

#### **6. Denial of Application and Appeals**

- If your members' applications are denied, is the reason for the denial explained to their satisfaction?
- How long after your members submit their applications do they receive notification regarding the denial?
- Do your members believe the reasons given for the denial are true?
  - Why/why not?
- For your members whose applications were denied, were they made aware of an appeals process?
  - Did any of your members file a complaint?
- What were their experiences during the appeals process?
- How satisfied were they with the appeals process?
  - Did they think it was fair and non-discriminatory?

## **7. FSA Website**

- Have your members looked at the FSA state website?
- Have your members looked at the FSA national website?
- If so, what do they use it for?
- Do they find it easy or difficult to use?
  - Did they find what they were looking for?
- What could be done to improve the website(s)?

## **8. Accessibility (Geographic and Physical)**

- How far away is the nearest FSA office from your members' homes?
- Would they describe the distance and location of the office as convenient?
- Does the distance or location cause your members any difficulty in participating in programs or receiving services from FSA?
- Are there any physical or other barriers at the office that make it difficult to obtain services there?

## **9. Participation Barriers**

- Is there any reason why any of your members declined participate in FSA programs even though they were eligible for and could have benefited from the program?
- Is there any reason why a customer or potential customer would be reluctant to participate in FSA programs?
- Are there any policies or procedures at the local, state, or national level that make it more difficult for customers or potential customers to participate in FSA programs?
- Is there any type of language barrier that makes it more difficult for your members to participate in FSA programs?

## **10. County Committees**

- Do your members think the County Committees adequately represents their interests?
  - Why/why not?
- Have any of your members ever served on a County Committee?
  - If so, what were their experiences in terms of fairly and non-discriminatorily assisting farmers and ranchers?
- Would those of your members who have served serve again on a County Committee?
  - Why/why not?

## **11. Improvements**

- What can FSA do to make it easier for your members to participate in FSA programs?
- How can FSA improve its procedures and programs to better serve customers in a non-discriminatory manner?

- How can FSA improve its services to better serve your members?
- Given your members experiences with USDA, what changes, improvements, or actions would your members take immediately to make USDA customers feel comfortable that they will be treated fairly and encourage them to take advantage of USDA services?

## **RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY CBO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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## **RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY CBO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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### **1. Initial Contacts with RMA**

- How do your members first become aware of USDA Risk Management Agency ("RMA")?
- How do they learn about insurance programs offered through USDA?
- Have your members ever spoken with a RMA employee?
  - o Describe.

### **2. Crop Insurance**

- How do your members first learn that crop insurance was available?
- Have your members ever purchased crop insurance?
- How do they locate a sales agent for purposes of purchasing crop insurance?

### **3. Sales Agents**

- Do your members believe insurance sales agents seem interested in their business?
- How would your members describe the services they receive from their sales agent?
- Do your members feel they were ever treated unfairly by someone at a crop insurance company?

- o If so, what happened?

#### **4. Loss Adjuster**

- Have your members ever had a loss under a crop insurance policy?
  - o If so, do they feel that their loss adjuster assessed their loss and processed their claim in a timely manner?
- Do they feel their loss adjuster handled their claims fairly and non-discriminatorily?
  - o Describe.

#### **5. Approved Insurance Providers**

- What is the reputation in the community of the AIPs in your area?
- Do your members believe that their AIP or any AIP gives better service to any particular type of producer?

#### **6. Outreach**

- Have your members ever seen their crop insurance provider or any other crop insurance provider advertise or sponsor local events, like workshops, that are directed toward producers?

#### **7. Participation Barriers**

- Is there any reason why any of your members declined participate in RMA programs even though they were eligible for and could have benefited from the program?
- Is there any reason why a customer or potential customer would be reluctant to participate in RMA programs?
- Are there any policies or procedures at the local, state, or national level that make it more difficult for customers or potential customers to participate in RMA programs?
  - o How many programs have your members participated in?
  - o What has been their experience after they received approval for funding?
- Is there any type of language barrier that makes it more difficult for your members to participate in RMA programs?

#### **8. Improvements**

- What can RMA do to make it easier for your members to participate in RMA programs?
- How can RMA improve its procedures and programs to better serve customers in a non-discriminatory manner?
- How can RMA improve its services to better serve your members?
- Given your members' experiences with USDA, what changes, improvements, or actions would your members take immediately to

make USDA customers feel comfortable that they will be treated fairly and encourage them to take advantage of USDA services?